

Nan and George Henriksen

Father and daughter have dedicated their lives to ensuring community grows properly

By CHRIS CLOHESSY

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The community doesn't carry the family name, but it seems that almost as long as there has been a couple of towns named Camas and Washougal, there has also been a Henriksen somewhere in the picture.

Henriksen started becoming a familiar face in the local area when a young man named Jorgen arrived in Washougal from Minnesota. His original place of departure was Denmark before he emigrated to the United States by way of Ellis Island, N.Y.

With his wife, Frances, Henriksen made his way to Washougal and settled in the Sunnyside area. Along with his brother, Henry, Henriksen opened the Henriksen Brothers General Merchandise Store in Washougal.

As a pioneer in the community, Henriksen helped formulate the City of Washougal, bringing in the woolen mill and establish the

first Camas-Washougal telephone exchange.

In the process of helping settle an upstart community, Jorgen and Frances also began a lasting legacy that has continued with their son, George, and granddaughter, Nan.

George Henriksen
Born in 1914, George Henriksen has been out in front or behind the scenes helping shape the Camas-Washougal community for much of his near 80 years.

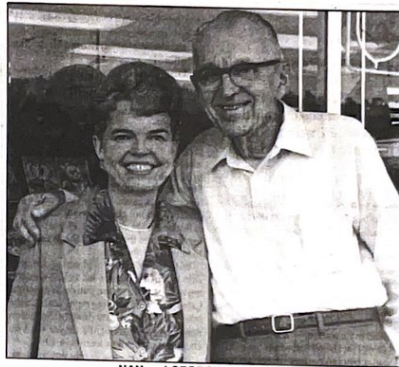
An all sport athlete, Henriksen graduated at the top of his class in 1932 from Washougal High School. Next, he was off to Bellingham Normal School because Henriksen originally planned to be a teacher.

His desire to be a teacher changed after one quarter in Bellingham. After returning home, Henriksen enrolled at North Pacific Dental and Pharmacy College in Portland.

After graduating, he became a teaching fellow at the school while working for a Portland Pharmacy. At the school, Henriksen met his future wife, Ellen, who he married in 1937.

With his family still on this side of the Columbia River, Henriksen chose to go into business in Camas with partner Ray Bachelder in 1940. Together, they operated Economy Drug for eight years on Northeast Fourth Avenue, the current location of Camas Sport Center.

In 1948, local businessman Mickey Schwary opened the One-Stop Shopping Center. Henriksen recalled that the center was the largest of its kind in the area at the time. Taking a risk, Henriksen opened Save-On Drug in the new One-Stop center.



NAN and GEORGE HENRIKSEN

"Quite a few people told me I'd fall flat on my face, that I'd go broke," Henriksen said.

It was also a venture that Henriksen took alone. "Ray (Bachelder) didn't want to work nights," he recounted. As a result, Henriksen took up operations at Save-On Drug while Bachelder remained behind at Economy Drug.

Devoting nearly 40 years to the One-Stop pharmacy, Henriksen obviously proved his detractors wrong.

Early on in those years, Henriksen also chose to make his home in the One-Stop neighborhood. Wanting to hook onto the paper mill's assessed value, the city's po-

See HENRIKSENS page 24

Henriksens...

Continued from page 23

lice protection and the district's school system, Henriksen pushed the City of Camas into annexing the One-Stop area.

Although the petition requesting the annexation was signed by 80 percent of the area's residents, Henriksen said, he also heard from a few people who were against the action. "They said if I wanted to stay in business, I'd keep my mouth shut," he said. But that was, and still isn't, his way.

His convictions extended beyond his business and family interests and into his politics. A devoted Republican, Henriksen served as a state committeeman for the party in the 1950s and committee chair in Clark County.

Never running for office himself, Henriksen nevertheless guided a few campaigns, including two successful bids for former Clark County Commissioner Fred Weakley.

Although he never served in a political office, Henriksen did serve as president of local organizations, such as the Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club.

He recalls fondly that the Kiwanis Club received national recognition at the time for its many civic contributions. "We were 83 members, all working for the betterment of Camas," he commented.

Along with heading up political campaigns, Henriksen also guided several successful school issues in Camas. His efforts led to many still-in-use facilities, such as Camas High School.

"All I worked for was good education for my children and good government for adults," Henriksen said of his efforts.

Having also been a world traveler and very involved with his church, Henriksen is trying to take life a little more slowly now. "I'm no longer quite as gung ho as I used to be," he noted.

Even if he isn't quite as involved as he used to be, Henriksen and his wife have created a lasting legacy through their children, Joanne, George, Nan and John. "I raised four exemplary kids," is a statement Henriksen echoes often.

Nan Henriksen
Although each of the Henriksens' children have gone on to successful careers, their daughter, Nan, has taken up the cause from her father to become a community leader.

Like her father, Nan Henriksen was the valedictorian of her class, with the exception being that she graduated from Camas High School.

Following high school, Henriksen headed off to the University of Washington where she later graduated Magna Cum Laude with a bachelor of arts degree in zoology and premed. She continued on through the MBA program at U of W.

After college, Henriksen put her education to work serving as contract administrator for the Bremerton, Wash., Naval Shipyard for three years, before choosing to return to Camas.

Back home, Henriksen joined her father in the Save-On Drug store. She eventually took over ownership of the store and expanded, adding the name Nan's Hallmark to the title.

Henriksen also became an active member of the Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce, giving her some initial exposure to city government. That exposure and hearing people "complain about the quality of the current city council" led to her next move.

Choosing to run for a seat on the Camas City Council, Henriksen said she was "tired

of people complaining."

With experience as a council member under her belt, Henriksen set her sights on the next level. Late in 1982 she launched her campaign to unseat incumbent Camas Mayor Don Christianson that resulted in "kind of an unpleasant battle," Henriksen commented. When it was over, she had emerged as Camas' new mayor.

Taking the oath of office in early 1993, Mayor Henriksen established her first order of business as setting goals with the council and city staff. "We got together and figured out a long-term vision for the community," she recalled. "We needed to focus on a common vision."

At the time, Camas was a community on the verge of major growth following the opening of the Interstate 205 Bridge. Henriksen said the common goal was to control the growth so that it benefited Camas.

Another priority on Henriksen's list was creation of a light industrial park in Camas that could take some of the financial load off the town's paper mill. Siting of the industrial park required extensive homework and a risk.

"We knew if an industrial park was going to be located here we would have to leap into the west," Henriksen explained. "We were convinced it was a chance worth taking. We really believed... believed in our ability to pull it off."

That decision led to the Cascade Business Park on Prune Hill. The first success of the park and the City of Camas was attracting Sharp Microelectronics Technology Inc. Later it was Heraeus Shin-Etsu America Inc.

Another of Henriksen's early goals as mayor involved opening the doors at city hall. "It was important to me to make city hall more customer friendly," she said. "Back in that era it was kind of a new concept that government should worry about

such things."

Opening up city hall eventually led to a decision to hire a full-time city administrator. "I was looking for someone who would focus on making things run efficiently," Henriksen said.

Along with opening lines of communication in city hall, Henriksen also worked to extend those lines to a regional and state level. "I felt it was extremely important Camas be involved intergovernmentally," she added.

That need for involvement led Henriksen to serve on a variety of regional and statewide boards. A partial list of some of those boards and her role includes the Association of Washington Cities, board member and president; Clark County Intergovernmental Resource Center, vice chair and executive board member; Planning Association of Washington, president and board member; and a variety of other agencies.

"A common thread was to create a better understanding of small, local government," Henriksen explained.

In all, Henriksen served for more than eight years as mayor of Camas. Shortly after being re-elected for another term in 1992, Henriksen's skills were recognized by then Washington Gov. Booth Gardner who appointed her to a full-time position with the Western Washington Growth Planning Hearings Board.

The hearings board is a quasi-judicial body that rules on local growth planning disputes.

Just recently, Henriksen was reappointed by Gov. Mike Lowry to a new six-year term on the hearings board.

With the reappointment, Henriksen expects the position to occupy her time for the near future. "I hope to spend the next few years making sure growth management in this state works," she added. After that, the future is undecided.